REMARKS

This amendment is in response to the Office Action dated September 27, 2006. Because this response is filed on January 29, 2007 with a one-month extension of time, the amendment is timely filed and shall be considered.

I. Status of the Claims

Claims 1, 6, 9, 14-15, 17, 19-21, 25, 26, 30-31, 39, 40, 43, and 44 have been amended. A number of claims have been canceled without prejudice and claims 46-57 have been added. Claims 1, 2, 4-6, 9-12, 14, 15, 17, 19-23, 25-28, 30-33, 38-57 are thus currently pending.

II. Response to September 27 Office Action

Claims 1-3, 5-8 and 15-45 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as allegedly being anticipated by Walker et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,779,549). Claims 4 and 9-14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over Walker in view of official notice. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested. Applicants address the rejections separately as to each independent claim and the claims that depend therefrom.

1. Claims 1, 2, 4-6, and 46-48

Claim 1 as amended is directed to a gaming system for playing a competitive bonus game that includes a first gaming apparatus having a game display unit; a value input device; and a controller operatively coupled to the game display unit and the value input device, the controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor. The controller is programmed to cause the game display unit to generate a game display relating to one of the following games: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo. The controller is also programmed to determine a value payout associated with an outcome of the game. The gaming system also includes a second gaming apparatus operatively coupled to the first gaming apparatus and a bonus controller operatively coupled to the first and second gaming apparatuses, the bonus controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor of the bonus controller. The bonus controller is programmed to enter a first

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player at the first gaming apparatus into the competitive bonus game when the first player obtains a qualifying event associated with the game. The competitive bonus game has a closed set of participants for the competitive bonus game, each of the participants attempting to achieve a goal, and wherein each of the participants has a probability of achieving the goal relative to all other participants in the closed set, the probability set to an initial value. The bonus controller is programmed to associate the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and to increase only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the player from the initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player, wherein increasing the probability for the participant decreases the probability for all other participants in the closed set. The bonus controller is also programmed to determine an outcome of the competitive bonus game, and to transmit data corresponding to the outcome of the competitive bonus game to the first and second gaming apparatuses.

In particular, amended claim 1 recites a competitive bonus game having a closed set of participants for the competitive bonus game, with each of the participants attempting to achieve a goal, and wherein each of the participants has a probability of achieving the goal relative to all other participants in the closed set, the probability set to an initial value. The bonus controller recited in claim 1 is programmed to associate the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and to increase only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the player from the initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player, wherein increasing the probability for the participant decreases the probability for all other participants in the closed set. These limitations distinguish the reference relied upon by the examiner.

Initially, with reference to Walker, it is noted that there does not appear to be any disclosure of a competitive bonus game having a closed set of participants for the competitive bonus game, with each of the participants attempting to achieve a goal. In contrast, Walker discloses an online tournament system that may restrict eligibility to a tournament, but does not appear to make any disclosure of a competitive bonus game with a closed set of participants. Walker also does not provide any disclosure of a bonus controller that is programmed to associate a first player with one and only one of the participants from the

closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game. Furthermore, Walker does not appear to make any disclosure of a bonus controller that is programmed to only increase the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player, wherein increasing the probability for the participant decreases the probability for all other participants in the closed set.

It is also noted that the amendment to claim 1 reciting that the bonus controller is programmed to "only increase the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player...," was not made to overcome Walker, but to distinguish the invention recited in the claim from systems that allow a player to increase the probability of achieving a goal for participants associated with other players. In other words, the gaming system recited in claim 1 will not allow the first player to increase the probability for any other participant, except for the participant associated with the first player.

Consequently, it is submitted that Walker does not disclose each and every limitation of the claimed invention. Moreover, because claims 2, 4-6, and 46-48 depend from claim 1, it is believed these claims are also allowable. Applicants also specifically traverse the rejection of claim 4. It is respectfully submitted that while mechanical slots were well known at the time of the invention, there is no way to know how the invention of Walker would function with a mechanical slot machine reel. The Office action relies upon Official Notice and does not produce prior art disclosing a competitive bonus game such as that recited in amended claim 1 in combination with a mechanical slot machine reel, or otherwise demonstrated that the art recognizes the suitability of combining the two. Accordingly, if the combination of elements is within the knowledge generally available to one or ordinary skill in the art, the applicants respectfully request production of authority supporting such a statement as well as a teaching or motivation to combine them. *See* MPEP 2144.03. Otherwise, it is clear that a *prima facie* case of obviousness cannot be established where all the limitations of a claimed combination are not taught or suggested by the prior art. *See In re Royka*, 490 F.2d 981, 180 USPQ 580 (CCPA 1974). *See also* MPEP 2143.03

2. Claims 9-12, 14 and 49

Amended claim 9 is directed to a gaming system for playing a competitive bonus game that includes a first gaming apparatus having a display unit; a value input device; and a controller operatively coupled to the display unit and the value input device, the controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor of the first gaming apparatus. The controller being programmed to: receive data representing a payline selection made by a first player, cause a game display to be generated by the display unit, the game display comprising images of a plurality of slot machine symbols each of which is associated with a respective slot machine reel, and determine a value payout associated with an outcome of the slots game, the controller being programmed to determine the outcome of the slots game based on a first configuration of the slot machine symbols. The gaming system also includes a second gaming apparatus operatively coupled to the first gaming apparatus, the second gaming apparatus having a display unit; a value input device; and a controller operatively coupled to the display unit and the value input device, the controller comprising a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor of the second gaming apparatus. The controller being programmed: to receive data representing a payline selection made by a second player, to cause a game display to be generated by the display unit, the game display comprising images of a plurality of slot machine symbols each of which is associated with a respective slot machine reel, and to determine a value payout associated with an outcome of the slots game, the controller being programmed to determine the outcome of the slots game based on a configuration of the slot machine symbols. The gaming system also including a bonus controller operatively coupled to the first and second gaming apparatuses, the bonus controller including a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor of the bonus controller. The bonus controller being programmed: to receive data from the first and second gaming apparatuses, to enter the first player at the first gaming apparatus into the competitive bonus game when the first player obtains a qualifying event associated with the slots game, wherein the competitive bonus game has a closed set of participants for the competitive bonus game, each of the participants attempting to achieve a goal, and wherein each of the participants has a probability of achieving the goal relative to all other participants in the closed set, the probability set to an initial value, to associate the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and to only increase the probability of achieving the goal

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for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player, wherein increasing the probability for the participant decreases the probability for all other participants in the closed set. The bonus controller is also programmed to determine an outcome of the competitive bonus game, and to transmit data corresponding to the outcome of the competitive bonus game to the first and second gaming apparatuses.

In particular, amended 9 recites a competitive bonus game having first and second gaming apparatuses with a controller programmed to: receive data representing a payline selection made by a player, cause a game display to be generated by a display unit, the game display comprising images of a plurality of slot machine symbols each of which is associated with a respective slot machine reel, and determine a value payout associated with an outcome of the slots game, the controller being programmed to determine the outcome of the slots game based on a first configuration of the slot machine symbols.

Similar to claim 1, claim 9 also recites, a competitive bonus game having a closed set of participants for the competitive bonus game, with each of the participants attempting to achieve a goal, and wherein each of the participants has an initial probability of achieving the goal relative to all other participants in the closed set. The bonus controller recited in claim 9 is programmed to associate the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and to increase only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the player from the initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player, wherein increasing the probability for the participant decreases the probability for all other participants in the closed set.

Thus, Applicants submit that the arguments made above relative to claim 1 apply with equal force to claim 9. Moreover, the arguments made above with respect to claim 4 relative to a slots game are also applicable to claims 9-12, 14 and 49. Consequently, amended claim 9 should be allowable as well. Moreover, because claims 10-12, 14 and 49 depend from claim 9, these claims are allowable as well.

3. Claims 15, 17, 50, and 51

Amended claim 15 is directed to a bonus controller for generating a competitive bonus game in a gaming system, the bonus controller including a processor and a memory operatively coupled to the processor. The bonus controller being programmed to receive data corresponding to a game selected from one of the following games: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo. The bonus controller is also programmed to enter a first player associated with a first gaming apparatus into the competitive bonus game when the first player obtains a qualifying event associated with one of the games, wherein the competitive bonus game has a closed set of participants for the competitive bonus game, each of the participants attempting to achieve a goal, and wherein each of the participants has a probability of achieving the goal relative to all other participants in the closed set, the probability set to an initial value. The bonus controller is further programmed: to associate the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, to increase only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player, wherein increasing the probability for the participant decreases the probability for all other participants in the closed set, to determine an outcome of the competitive bonus game, and to transmit data corresponding to the outcome of the competitive bonus game.

In particular, amended claim 15 recites, similar to claim 1, a competitive bonus game having a closed set of participants for the competitive bonus game, with each of the participants attempting to achieve a goal, wherein each of the participants has an initial probability of achieving the goal relative to all other participants in the closed set. The bonus controller recited in claim 15 is programmed to associate the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and to increase only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the player from the initial probability upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player, wherein increasing the probability for the participant decreases the probability for all other participants in the closed set.

Thus, Applicants submit that the arguments made above relative to claim 1 apply with equal force to claim 15. Consequently, claim 15 should be allowable as well. Moreover,

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because claims 17, 50, and 51 depend from claim 15, these claims are allowable at least

because of their dependence from claim 15.

4. Claims 19-23, 25-28, 52, and 53

Amended claim 19 is directed to a gaming method including causing a game display

of one of the following games to be generated on a display unit of a first gaming apparatus:

poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo; causing a game display of one of the following games

to be generated on a display unit of a second gaming apparatus: poker, blackjack, slots, keno

or bingo; determining an event associated with the game represented by the game display

generated on the display unit of the first gaming apparatus; and transmitting data from the

first gaming apparatus to a bonus controller. The method also includes determining if the

event is a qualifying event for a competitive bonus game; qualifying a first player at the first

gaming apparatus for the competitive bonus game if the event is a qualifying event; limiting

the competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of the participants attempting

to reach a goal; establishing an initial probability of achieving the goal for each of the

participants relative to all other participants in the closed set; and associating the first player

with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the

competitive bonus game. The method also includes increasing only the probability of

achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial

probability and decreasing the probability for all other participants in the closed set, upon

occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player; initiating the competitive

bonus game; transmitting display data associated with the competitive bonus game from the

bonus controller to a display unit; and determining a value payout associated with a bonus

outcome of the competitive bonus game.

In particular, amended method claim 19 recites, similar to claim 1, limiting the

competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of the participants attempting to

reach a goal; associating the first player with one and only one of the participants from the

closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and increasing only the

probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the

initial probability and decreasing the probability for all other participants in the closed set,

upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player;

Thus, Applicants submit that the arguments made above relative to claim 1 apply with equal force to claim 19. Thus, claim 19 should be allowable as well. Furthermore, because claims 20-23, 25-28, 52, and 53 depend from claim 19, these claims are allowable at least because of their dependence from claim 19.

5. Claims 30-33, 38, and 54-57

Amended claim 30 is directed to a gaming method that includes causing a video image representing a game to be generated at a first gaming apparatus, the video image representing one of the following games: video poker, video blackjack, video slots, video keno or video bingo, the video image comprising an image of at least five playing cards if the game represented by the video image generated at the first gaming apparatus comprises video poker, the video image comprising an image of a plurality of simulated slot machine reels if the game represented by the video image generated at the first gaming apparatus comprises video slots, the video image comprising an image of a plurality of playing cards if the game represented by the video image generated at the first gaming apparatus comprises video blackjack, the video image comprising an image of a plurality of keno numbers if the game represented by the video image generated at the first gaming apparatus comprises video keno, and the video image comprising an image of a bingo grid if the game represented by the video image generated at the first gaming apparatus comprises video bingo. The method also includes determining an event associated with the game represented by the video image generated at the first gaming apparatus; determining if the event is a qualifying event for a competitive bonus game; qualifying a first player for the competitive bonus game if the event is a qualifying event; and limiting the competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of the participants attempting to reach a goal. The method also includes establishing an initial probability of achieving the goal for each of the participants relative to all other participants in the closed set; associating the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game; increasing only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability and decreasing the probability for all other participants in the closed set, upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player; causing a video image representing the competitive bonus game to be generated, the video image representing a race-type competitive bonus game or a rotating wheel type competitive

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bonus game; initiating the competitive bonus game; generating a randomized computation of the participant modified according to the probability associated with the participant; and identifying which participant achieves its' goal first.

In particular, amended method claim 30 recites, similar to claim 1, limiting the competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of the participants attempting to reach a goal; associating the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and increasing only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability and decreasing the probability for all other participants in the closed set, upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player. Furthermore, amended claim 30 also recites in particular, displaying a video image representing a race-type competitive bonus game or a rotating wheel type competitive bonus game; and generating a randomized computation of the participant modified according to the probability associated with the participant. None of these limitations appear to be disclosed in Walker.

Thus, Applicants submit that the arguments made above relative to claim 1 apply with equal force to claim 30. Thus, amended claim 30 is not anticipated by Walker and should be allowable as well. Furthermore, because claims 31-33, 38, and 54-57 depend from claim 30, these claims are allowable at least because of their dependence from claim 30.

6. Claims 39-42

Amended claim 39 is directed to a method of providing a competitive bonus game in a gaming network, including receiving data at a bonus controller, the data corresponding to play of one of the following games at a gaming apparatus: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo; qualifying a first player for the competitive bonus game if an event associated with the game played at the gaming apparatus is a qualifying event; limiting the competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of the participants attempting to reach a goal; and establishing an initial probability of achieving the goal for each of the participants relative to all other participants in the closed set. The method also includes associating the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game; increasing only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability and decreasing the probability for all other participants in the closed set, upon occurrence of any additional

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qualifying event for the first player; initiating the competitive bonus game; transmitting display data associated with the competitive bonus game from the bonus controller to a display unit, the display unit being operatively coupled to the bonus controller; and determining a value payout associated with an outcome of the competitive bonus game.

In particular, amended method claim 39 recites, similar to claim 1, limiting the competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of the participants attempting to reach a goal; associating the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and increasing only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability and decreasing the probability for all other participants in the closed set, upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player.

Thus, Applicants submit that the arguments made above relative to claim 1 apply with equal force to claim 39. Thus, amended claim 39 is not anticipated by Walker and should be allowable as well. Furthermore, because claims 40-42 depend from claim 39, these claims are allowable at least because of their dependence from claim 39.

7. Claims 43-45

Amended claim 43 is directed to a memory having a computer program stored therein, the computer program being capable of being used in connection with a bonus controller in a gaming system, the memory including memory portions physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the bonus controller: to receive data corresponding to a game, the game selected from one of the following games: poker, blackjack, slots, keno or bingo; to enter a first player into the competitive bonus game when the first player obtains a qualifying event associated with the game; to limit the competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of the participants attempting to reach a goal; and to establish an initial probability of achieving the goal for each of the participants relative to all other participants in the closed set. The memory further includes memory portions physically configured in accordance with computer program instructions that would cause the bonus controller: to associate the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game; to increase only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability and decreasing the probability for all other participants in the closed set,

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upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player; to determine an outcome of the competitive bonus game; and r to transmit data corresponding to the outcome of the competitive bonus game to a display unit.

In particular, amended claim 43 recites, similar to claim 1, memory portions physically configured: to limit the competitive bonus game to a closed set of participants, each of the participants attempting to reach a goal; associate the first player with one and only one of the participants from the closed set when the first player enters the competitive bonus game, and increase only the probability of achieving the goal for the participant associated with the first player from the initial probability and decreasing the probability for all other participants in the closed set, upon occurrence of any additional qualifying event for the first player.

Thus, Applicants submit that the arguments made above relative to claim 1 apply with equal force to claim 43. Thus, amended claim 43 should be allowable as well. Furthermore, because claims 44-45 depend from claim 43, these claims are allowable at least because of their dependence from claim 43.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the above application is in condition for allowance, and reconsideration is respectfully requested. If there is any matter that the Examiner would like to discuss, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned representative at the telephone number set forth below. In any event, the Director is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in the fees filed, asserted to be filed or which should have been filed herewith to our Deposit Account No. 13-2855, under Order No. 29757/AG101.

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Respectfully submitted,

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